

Identify three ways you can you apply these principles during the Nativity fast?

- a.
- b.
- c.

Evangelist Matthew: Read Matthew 9:9-13

On November 16th we celebrate the life of the Evangelist Matthew. Not only did he give us an account of the Nativity story, but he is an example of a person who renounced worldly values and a sinful life to follow Christ. He was a tax collector which is akin to a corrupt bill collector today. In those days a tax collector was free to collect extra fees for his own benefit. Therefore, he was a wealthy man who enjoyed much power in his role. He was a Jew working for the Romans and was despised for his activities. It was the call of Christ that changed his life. He was transformed from a man controlled by the desire for power and money into a herald for the Good News.

Here is the hymn from Vespers on his feast day:

*When Christ who searched human hearts discerned through His divine foreknowledge,
O Apostles Matthew, your God-loving disposition, He rescued you from the world of
injustice. He transformed you into a universal light, commanding you to illuminate the
ends of the earth. He made you worthy to commit clearly to writing the divine Gospel. O
Apostle, pray to Christ that He might save and illumine our souls!*

What were the words Jesus used to call Matthew?

How did Jesus strengthen His friendship with Matthew?

Who were Matthews established friends?

What was Jesus' justification for keeping company with sinners?

What does God prefer to animal or ritual sacrifice and how can we give this in our preparation?

Jesus said, "I did not come to call righteous, but sinners, to repentance." Matthew is an example of this. Even though he was an outcast and a sinner he understood the Love of Christ unlike the Pharisees who could not. He believed and later became a great missionary in Palestine and Ethiopia where he was martyred. His Life after choosing to follow Christ was radiant with light. He became a disciple of the Kingdom of Heaven. (Read his full story at this link <http://oca.org/saints/lives/2013/11/16/103313-apostle-and-evangelist-matthew>)

Consider the following questions:

What were the temptations that Matthew might have faced and had to resist after his conversion?

How in this season of the Nativity fast can we show kindness both to “outcasts or sinners” and “respectable or righteous” people?

Read Luke 12:16-21

Next Sunday, November 17th, the Gospel lesson is the parable of the rich fool. In our culture the wealthy person is usually seen as one who is successful. Jesus gives us a picture of a wealthy man whose only problem was the abundance of his wealth and calls him a fool. Don't we consider one who has no worries about money to be successful and one who never has enough to be a bit lazy? Think about what this story is telling us about some of our assumed thoughts.

Why does Jesus call this rich man a fool?

What did the rich man mistake for security?

Since material goods are not evil in themselves what attitudes regarding material possessions make their use good or evil?

Jesus warns us not to be greedy for material things, but to be “rich towards God.” What does this mean to you?

How can we apply this in our life during this period of preparation for the feast of the Nativity of God?

The period of the Nativity fast is also a period for charity. We should seek out those who are disadvantaged, who are suffering, who are in need of material things as well as spiritual uplifting. We should try to make time out of our busy schedules to help others who are in need. Often we become so wrapped up in the need to satisfy our children and grandchildren, who already have more than they need, with the latest toys. They are in some respect like the rich fool. In the process we can forget to turn our attention to those who are in real need. Try and find one way which you and your family can help others outside of your own family during this period.

Meditation

For he who holds possessions... and houses as the gifts of God, and ministers from them to the God Who gives them for the salvation of people, and knows that he possesses them more for the sake of the brethren than his own, and is superior to the possession of them, not the slave of things of the things he possesses, and does not carry them about in his soul, not bind and circumscribe his life with them, but is ever laboring at some good and divine work, even should he be necessarily some time deprived of them, is able with cheerful mind to bear their removal equally with their abundance. This is he who is blessed by the Lord, and called poor in spirit, a meet heir of the Kingdom of heaven. (Clement of Alexandria)

Prayer:

*Let us rejoice!
Let us celebrate with songs!
The revelation of Christ is made manifest:
the preachings of the prophets
have received their fulfillment.
For Christ of whom they spoke,
foretelling His appearance in the flesh,
is to be born in a holy cave
and to be placed as a babe in a manger.
With uprightiness of mind
let us lift up a joyful prayer,
celebrating the coming of the Lord.
O Christ, our god, glory to You!*

Adapted from Vesper Hymn for the Forefeast of the Birth of Christ.

Describe how you and your family can prepare for the feast of the nativity keeping in mind always the teachings and life of Christ. Identify an activity for each of the weeks between now and Christmas day. Lay out a family plan for this important period.

Some activities to consider:

Purchase a Nativity Icon and light a candle in front of it at the beginning of each nights meal each day during the fast.

Read the Christmas Story in Matt 1:18 - Chapter 2 and Luke chapters 1 and 2. Identify the characters and events (make a list of each) that took place and make a time line of them. Get a biblical map and find the locations and paths that were taken by those involved in the story. Have each member of the family select a part of the story and character and act out the part.



Reference: *A Year of the Lord: Liturgical Bible Studies, Vol. 2*